

ars, and the media as well as to revise our interpretive programs at Monticello.

Allow me to conclude with a few observations about how to deal with interpretive controversies:

Remind yourself that interpretation is a work in progress. At Monticello, we learn as we go from our own mistakes and from the accomplishments of other programs. Research drives interpretation, and research will bring new information and insights.

Be scholarly! Our staff-developed, board-approved master plan charges us to base our interpretation on sound research. Presently, we have eight Ph.D.s at Monticello and six colleagues who have published one or more books with a university press. Doing academic research is not foolproof, but it offers the best chance to get your history right.

Be proactive, not reactive, about your difficult issues. To be passive or silent on a controversy is to lose—and to lose big and quickly. Take a broad view and develop a comprehensive program. Establish a larger context.

Get help. At Monticello, we have long benefited from the advice and perspective of our African-American Interpretation Advisory Committee. Our staff also meets one-on-one with individuals or small groups of people who have an informed opinion or a vested interest in specific issues. We seek out models

elsewhere and try to glean the “best practices” from sister organizations. And, be grateful for informed critics—I can name several feisty individuals who have helped push Monticello in the right direction over the last decade.

Don't expect a smooth ride. Controversial issues bring heavy baggage. You can expect unpleasant experiences and painful times, not a happy consensus. Controversy is a part of accurate history.

Get on with it. Take the plunge! It's better to tackle your issue now rather than later. If you raise a difficult subject for the purpose of getting your history right, and ground yourself with a scholarly approach, the results will be positive.

We don't claim to have “resolved” this issue, or to have smoothed over its emotional impact, or to have found the “right” way to discuss it with our visitors. We have plenty of critics who will tell us just the opposite. But we have learned much from the “DNA” controversy, and we already knew that difficult issues are a part of historical integrity. We will have other controversies to face. But, to quote Thomas Jefferson, “...we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead.”

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The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs

Avibrant movement of African-American women activists emerged out of the late-19th century's climate of increased racial tension and violence. The National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC) resulted in the merger of two organizations, the National Federation of Afro-American Women (NFAAW) and the National League of Colored Women (NLCW). In 1896, to more effectively accomplish their goals, these two organizations decided to unite their voices and create the NACWC, a single national network that could focus on the concerns of African American women. Through this forum, women working on similar issues in different regions of the country could share information and learn from each other's experiences.

Throughout the 100 years of its existence the NACWC has worked steadily to fulfill the mandate of

its motto, “Lifting As We Climb.” In the early years, the national program included establishing schooling and housing. The NACWC was an early advocate for the preservation of African-American history. One of its more significant contributions was its 1916 campaign to restore the home of Frederick Douglass. Additionally, political involvement in campaigning for anti-lynching legislation and women's rights set the NACWC apart from earlier African-American women's organizations which had focused on charitable and religious work. Through these contributions, the NACWC has significantly influenced the lives of many Americans.

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